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ABSTRACT

The article provides a format for a workshop in which three issues which must be resolved by educators of secondary aged students with behavior disorders are discussed. The three issues to be addressed are: (1) determination of appropriate curriculum emphasis, (2) parent training/involvement in intervention strategies, and (3) criteria for determination of the appropriate educational delivery system and the least restrictive environment for behaviorally disordered students at the secondary level. The workshop participants are divided into small study groups each of which receives a study sheet with a brief sample problem situation designed to provoke discussion and a set of study probes designed to focus on potential solutions to each of the three issues. Following the small group discussions, a general discussion enables each participant to hear solutions proposed by other groups. (PHR)

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Resolving Issues Relevant to the Education of Secondary School Aged Youth With Behavior Disorders

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Resolving Issues Relevant to the Education of Secondary School Aged Youth With Behavior Disorders

There are many issues that must be resolved at a practical level by educators of secondary school aged youth with behavior disorders. Several of these issues center around: (1) determination of appropriate curriculum emphasis; (2) parent training/involvement in intervention strategies; and (3) criteria for determination of the appropriate educational delivery system and the least restrictive environment for behaviorally disordered children at the secondary school level. Teachers and administrators across the nation are confronting these issues in various manners. The purpose of the presentation described in this article was to provide a structured forum designed to stimulate thought and mutual sharing of ideas among national colleagues who face the challenge of educating emotionally disturbed/behavior disordered youth at the secondary level.

For such information-sharing to be profitable, the attention of professional participants should be focused on the resolution of practical issues and problems common to all. To achieve such an end, each member of the discussion groups received a study sheet relevant to each of the three major issues suggested above. Each study sheet contained a clarification of the issue to be discussed, a brief sample problem situation designed to provoke discussion and a set of study probes designed to lead the partic-

pants as a group to focus on potential solutions to the problem. The sample problem situation and discussion probes relevant to each of the three pertinent issues are presented below.

I. What is the appropriate curriculum emphasis for secondary school-age youth with behavior disorders?

Given the heterogeneous nature of this population, the educational needs for each student will be different. Nevertheless, there are those who would contend that one particular curriculum emphasis should permeate the entire curriculum. The B.D. teacher must make a choice. Should the curriculum vary equally among emphases or should one particular curriculum emphasis predominate? Possible curriculum emphases are:

Academic -instruction in the "traditional" academic subjects (junior and/or senior high school Math, English, Science and Social Studies).

Vocational -based on the assumption that "traditional" academic preparation will not be particularly beneficial for this population. Curriculum includes instruction in vocational education and manual job-related skills.

Social -based on the assumption that this population of students is characterized by

an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and/or adults. Curriculum includes many social and group activities designed to improve interpersonal relationships.

Affective -based on the assumption that this population is characterized by inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal conditions. Curriculum includes recognizing and controlling one's own emotions and how one feels about himself/herself.

Discussion Probes

Assuming that all four curriculum emphases will be present to some degree in a program for secondary students with behavior disorders:

1. Can we rank order the four emphases in terms of importance to a curriculum for behavior disordered students at the secondary level. If so, how? If not, why not?
2. What considerations should determine which of the curriculum emphases should predominate in a given program?

II. How can we be successful in training and involving parents in intervention strategies?

A child cannot realistically be isolated from the environment which influenced him. One of the most difficult problems

faced by educators of secondary youth with behavior disorders has been the difficulty of intervening beyond the school environment. Too many times, intervention begins when the child walks in the school door and ends when he walks out the door back into the same pathological home or community environment which was instrumental in producing the disordered behavior in the first place. Effective intervention cannot stop at the door of the schoolhouse or the counselor's office. Intervention must focus on the critical point of interaction between the child and the significant elements in his/her environment. The appropriate strategies could range from parent conferences and counseling sessions to legal action.

Discussion Probes

1. How have you been successful in involving parents in intervention strategies concerning their own behavior disordered children?
2. What are the best ways to motivate parents to want to become involved with the intervention strategies or to participate in counseling sessions?
3. What can be done for the secondary behavior disordered youth when his/her parents refuse to become involved in intervention or counseling?

III. What is the criteria for determining the appropriate education delivery system and least restrictive environment for behavior

disordered students at the secondary level?

A. P.L. 94-142 requires that exceptional children be placed in the least restrictive environment.

B. P.L. 94-142 requires that education be tailored to meet the unique needs of a handicapped child.

C. Service delivery options include: regular class placement, regular class with intinerant assistance, regular class with resource room, self-contained special class, special day school and residential school.

Discussion Probes

1. Given the mandate of Public Law 94-142 and the constraints upon most public school districts, what criteria should be used to determine the least restrictive placement for the secondary student with behavior disorders?
2. Suggest a list of administrative guidelines that would be appropriate for a school district to follow in determining appropriate placement in the least restrictive environment for a secondary behavior disordered student?
3. In many secondary schools, the scheduling of classes is an immense problem, often requiring the use of computers. How can secondary school administrators provide appropriate resource room assistance for behavior disordered students without disrupting the schedule of the regular academic classes? If the student is forced to miss a

regular academic class, how shall he/she receive enough credits to graduate?

4. In a secondary school, grading and credits toward graduation assume increased importance. Should resource room credits be counted as credits toward graduation? By what criteria should the special education teacher assign grades to the behavior disordered students who come to the resource room for one or two periods per day?
5. How does the resource teacher obtain cooperation from the behavior disordered students' other regular academic teachers in the secondary school?

Each session participant took part in a small group problem-solving discussion relevant to the three professional issues presented. Following the small group discussions, a general discussion enabled each session participant to hear some of the solutions proposed by other groups.

The structured format of the workshop described in this article is recommended for future meetings in which professional colleagues of varied backgrounds gather in an attempt to resolve practical issues. It must be remembered, however, that the success of any such workshop depends to a great extent on the willingness of each member to participate by contributing his expertise to the resolution of the problem. For any additional information concerning the organization of the workshop or the general discussion of the professional issues, the reader is invited to contact the session leader.